NORDEUROPA*forum*
Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur
ISSN 1863639X
2/2003
13. Jahrgang (6. der N.F.)
Seiten 61-85

Cognition, Representation and Security Community Building in the Baltic Sea Region

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Zusammenfassung

In Verbindung mit anderen sozialwissenschaftlichen Ansätzen können kognitive Ansätze helfen, die Frage zu beantworten, ob die Ostseeregion bereits als Sicherheitsgemeinschaft im Sinne von Karl Deutsch verstanden werden kann. Obwohl viele Arbeiten vorliegen, die das analytische Konzept der Sicherheitsgemeinschaft in der einen oder anderen Form auf die Ostseeregion anwenden, ist die kognitive Dimension in der Literatur bisher nicht betont worden. In dem Artikel wird das Konzept der Sicherheitsgemeinschaft zunächst konzeptionell vorgestellt und historisch eingeordnet. Es folgt eine Diskussion ausgewählter Aspekte zwischenstaatlicher und gesellschaftlicher Beziehungen in der Region im Lichte kognitiver und diskursanalytischer Ansätze. Der Schwerpunkt der Darstellung liegt auf den Beziehungen zwischen den baltischen Staaten und Russland. Abschließend werden kognitive Ansätze vor allem in methodologischer Hinsicht problematisiert und mögliche Forschungsorientierungen skizziert.

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Security Communities as Mental Constructions[1]

Security communities are social institutions comprising groups of people who base their mutual interactions on dependable expectations of peaceful change.[2] These expectations are mainly derived from compatible values relevant to political decision making and mutual responsiveness. “Security community” is both an analytical concept and the label for the sum of diverse processes of social interaction which in themselves need not to have anything to do with security, for example economic transactions, relationships among the elite, social communication, mobility of persons and so on. The driving force behind these processes of social interaction is not a search for security, but their result is a sense of community and a we-feeling: individuals in a group have come to the conclusion that “common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of ‘peaceful change’”, i.e. without resort to large-scale physical force. Then, they have become integrated in the sense that they have attained “a ‘sense of community’ and […] institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a ‘long’ time, dependable expectations of ‘peaceful change’”.[3]

This chain of definitions is not without problems. For example, what does “long” mean? The use of inverted commas indicates both the desirability of some temporal qualification and the difficulty of establishing a non-arbitrary measure. As a consequence, integration is said to be “a matter of fact, not

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of time".[4] Once people have become integrated, it matters little how long the process of security community building took. It may indeed take decades or even generations until the threshold is crossed beyond which groups of people neither expect nor prepare for war with fellow members of the security community, and this threshold may be crossed and re-crossed several times. A linear development towards a security community is but one of several possible paths. The span of roughly fifteen years after the end of the bloc antagonism is, historically, a blink of an eye, but it is important that the peaceful changes of the 1990s in the Baltic Sea region have not been interrupted by regression to more violent forms of dealing with conflicts (save for some violent situations in Lithuania and Latvia in 1991). Yet, without subscribing to the argument used by realism in the last resort to set bounds to alternative interpretations – the issue of uncertainty in international relations – a note of warning may be in order: security community building may fail even after a promising beginning. Likewise, a security community may not prove stable in the event. A merging of formerly independent units in one single unit with a common government – what Deutsch called amalgamation[5] – is even more difficult to attain and to preserve than a pluralistic security community, i.e. a community "which retains the legal independence of separate governments".[6] Furthermore, the amalgamated type has not been found to be more stable than its pluralistic counterpart.[7] In any case, in the Baltic Sea region an amalgamated security community is not on the cards. Even the most ambitious integration project, the enlargement of the European Union, will not include Russia. The Council of the Baltic Sea States, on the other hand, does include all political actors in the region but, due to its organizational principle and mandate, it cannot be considered an amalgamated political community. It is reassuring, then, that Deutsch and associates considered pluralism "the major and most general policy goal to be sought".[8]

A security community is characterized by stability of expectations of continuing peaceful adjustment. Peaceful change alone thus does not make a security community. To a large extent security community building is a mental process.[9] It is not about peaceful change, but about *expectations* of peaceful change; it is not about community, but about a *sense* of community and a we-*feeling*. It has to do with beliefs which may be defined as "propositions that policy makers hold to be true, even if they cannot be verified".[10] Like all political action, security community building reflects perceptions and interpretations as well as meaning attached to both. It is also important to note that security communities are concerned not only with the narrow circle of policy makers but, rather, with groups of people and individuals in a group in general.[11] Perceptions and beliefs are somewhat intangible subject matters but a number of methodological approaches have been suggested in the literature, among which content analysis – understood here as the study and contextualization of the texts produced by an individual or an organization as well as the analysis of the relationship between these texts – seems to be one of the more promising and methodologically feasible approaches,[12] with "text" meaning less than all available textual materials, but more than just the official security policy statements. To give preference to national security documents would presuppose a value judgement according to which these documents are

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more important and more significant texts than others. This procedure would confirm the traditional understanding and logic of state-centred security which the concept of a security community precisely aspires to transcend.

Studying beliefs, contexts and contents is rendered even more difficult by the fact that the relationship between beliefs and policy is not as straightforward as attitudinal research is sometimes inclined to take for granted.[13] Discourse analysis holds that beliefs are translated into policies through systems of language establishing “the rules governing what can be said and what not”. Discourse analysis therefore argues that because “[s]tructures within discourse condition possible policies” it is more important – and methodologically easier – to analyze language and structures of language than beliefs.[14] It does not expound the problems of the relationship between what is being said and what is being thought and believed. Yet, security communities are as much mental constructions as they are material constructions. They are something that has to be believed in, expected, sensed, thought and felt. In the light of the specific research interest motivating this article – security community building in the Baltic Sea region – it is therefore suggested that the clear separation of discursive from cognitive approaches is not the most appropriate analytical tool. Rather, different discursive structures and belief systems, especially collective belief systems, are interrelated, influencing, shaping and regulating each other. Furthermore, different discursive structures can exist simultaneously, overlap and compete with each other, and belief systems can help to explain why preference is given to one discursive structure rather than another in a given situation. Finally, discourse analysis cannot analyze the different degrees of internalization of the belief in the identification with one another in terms of security. As it will be suggested in the conclusions, such an analysis is indispensable in understanding security community building. Deutsch and his team were sceptical about the relevance of acts of articulation to security community building: “The populations of different territories might easily profess verbal attachment to the same set of values without having a sense of community that leads to political integration.”[15] Likewise, constructivists and realists stress the “strategic role of deception in public statements” and emphasize that it is often misleading to rely on what actors say.[16]

While concentrating on the belief system of a single decision maker considerably facilitates the empirical task, it (over-)simplifies both the social nature of most decision making processes and the equally social nature of the construction of individual belief systems. While the focus on high policy issues such as security is still an important research orientation, both the low policy components of security communities and the general trend towards desecurization in the Baltic Sea region throughout the 1990s require the inclusion in the analysis of low policy issues. While a research focus on images of the external enemy and external others has a long tradition in the disciplines of international politics and peace research, the study of images of internal enemies (the Other at home) seems to be an equally important analytical task given the population composition in the Baltic states, especially in Latvia and Estonia, and the frequent depiction, especially in the first half of the 1990s, of the Russian-speaking population

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as potential “fifth columns”, thus mixing domestic and foreign policy issues.[17]

On the Origins of the Security Community Pattern

It is useful to remember that “security” as a concept was a fairly new invention when Deutsch and his team constructed their approach to peaceful changes. Indeed, as a concept it was almost non-existent, and to the extent that it did exist, it was a political rather than an analytical concept. Embodied in the United States National Security Act of 1947, the introduction of the term “security” helped render security the primary goal of the state; national security became *the* national interest; security was equated with national security defined in terms of the security of the state and to be realized primarily with military means. The 1947 National Security Act helped transforming security into something which “belonged primarily to the state; people, like the armed forces, were its instruments, and also, potentially, its enemies”.[18] Security was organized according to the internal logic of the state in the following decades.

Perhaps to dissociate themselves from this particular reading of security, Deutsch and associates referred to “political” rather than “security” community in the title of their study. Their approach in fact was in contradistinction to both the official political view and the view prevalent in the academic establishment at that time. Their writings on security communities profoundly challenged the conventional scholarly wisdom. The concept did not fit into the dominant security logic. Firstly, its societal focus on integration among groups of people, which may or may not be organized in a nation-state, violated the prevailing state-centrism. Secondly, the concept did not match the military-centrism of that time because it deliberately downplayed military issues. Even the effects of foreign threats were seen as only transitory: “Most often they provided an impetus toward temporary military alliances, while more permanent unions derived their main support from other factors”.[19] Thirdly, the concept did not fit into the materialism-centrism of that time because it was to a large extent interested in non-material and social factors such as shared beliefs and expectations, communication, social interaction and learning.

The concept also challenged the basic patterns of the then leading school of thought in international politics, realism. Firstly, by investigating the sources of peace rather than those of war, “Karl Deutsch took the classical problematic of realism and changed it slightly to generate a new research program”[20]. Secondly, by establishing that durable expectations of peaceful change between states and societies are indeed possible in an anarchic environment, Deutsch questioned core realist assumptions such as the security dilemma. Thirdly, by stressing that security communities have often developed around a core of strength, Deutsch disagreed with core realist assumptions with respect to the balancing behaviour of states. Fourthly, by focusing on beliefs rather than material factors, he rejected realism’s mechanical understanding of states’ behaviour as following from objectively measurable material, especially military capabilities. Fifthly, rather than treating national security as a “symbol [which] suggests protection through power”[21], Deutsch understood security in terms of community building.

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Finally, peace within a security community did not require a Leviathan but rather a pluralistic framework involving state and non-state actors.

Recent Research

Recent research on security communities has focused mainly on three dimensions. The first is a constructivist reformulation of the original security community pattern. Like the original concept, it theoretically reflects the existence of political community at the international level, identification with one another in terms of security and aims to develop the original writings further theoretically, conceptually and methodologically. It seems, however, that the distance to the original writings is sometimes exaggerated. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, for example, stress that power can function as a magnet, especially in its alternative understanding as "the authority to determine shared meaning that constitutes the 'we-feeling' and practices of states and the conditions which confer, defer, or deny access to the community and the benefits it bestows on its members".[22] Here, they are indeed close to the original concept's emphasis on cores of strength around which integrative processes often develop.[23] Likewise, their differentiation between a loosely coupled and a tightly coupled security community is in accordance with the original concept's understanding of a security community as a process.[24]

The second focus in the current research on security communities is on the origins of the Nordic security community. In the original writings, Deutsch and his associates regarded the historical Norwegian-Swedish Union as an amalgamated security community,[25] albeit one which was characterized by only limited amalgamation[26] and prevented from full amalgamation by Norwegian fears of a permanent minority status,[27] different threat perceptions in the 1890s with resulting disagreement about the level of military burdens and joint defence against Russia,[28] insufficient responsiveness on the part of the Swedish government in regard to the rise of political parties in Norway in the second half of the 19th century[29] and the lack of Norwegian support for full amalgamation.[30] Consequently, the Union failed. Its dissolution was accelerated by both Norwegian opinion's willingness in 1905 "to accept the possibility of a short war against Sweden in order to cut the last ties of Norwegian dependence on that country"[31] and a Swedish shift towards "a policy of greater firmness and potential coercion vis-à-vis Norway".[32] After the dissolution of the Union, integration was achieved between Norway and Sweden in the form of a pluralistic security community since 1907.[33] The Scandinavian states, i.e. Denmark, Norway and Sweden, were inconsistently considered a "still-developing security-community"[34] and a pluralistic security community.[35] Finland is discussed in connection with the Scandinavian security community only once and is not yet seen as a full member.[36] The current research has added more clarity with regard to the origins of the Nordic security community by, firstly, explaining northern anomalies[37] and, secondly, analyzing so-called "non-wars", i.e. situations which had the potential to, but did not violently escalate, thus serving as formative events for the Nordic security community.[38]

The third focus of the recent work on security communities is on the

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discussion of the extent to which the Baltic Sea region can already be referred to in terms of a security community. Peter Wallensteen and associates explored this question as early as in 1994. They came to the conclusion that, regardless of individual routes to military security among the Baltic Sea states, deficiencies in institution-building and uncertainties as to the developments in the Russian Federation, "in a long-term perspective the Baltic Region has been heading towards what Deutsch would label 'a security community'"[39]. The nationalization of military security has been avoided by the current and future NATO membership of Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the comprehensive Partnership for Peace program and the general trends during the 1990s towards a soft security agenda. Furthermore, security communities do not require common institutions. The Nordic security community is a case in point. Here, the importance to conflict resolution of formal foreign and security policy institutions lies precisely in their absence. Indeed, "the Nordic resolution of conflicts is not directly related to the efficiency of Nordic organs".[40] Nordic institutions are effects rather than causes of peaceful conflict resolution. In the Baltic Sea region, however, the institutionalization of the Council of the Baltic Sea States has to some extent remedied the deficiencies in institution-building observed by Wallensteen and associates and contributed to peaceful conflict resolution and the softening of the security agenda.[41]

The developments in the Russian Federation seem to be more predictable today than ten years ago, in particular when it comes to the issue of peaceful conflict resolution. Throughout the 1990s Russia's Baltic policy was one of peaceful and reactive adaptation including, until the summer of 1994, the peaceful management of a process as militarily-strategically challenging, technically complicated and politico-psychologically demanding as the troop withdrawal from the Baltic states. In the second half of the decade, it was a policy of what Graeme Herd has called "constructive engagement" which refers to substantial Russian disarmament in the Baltic Sea region and North-west Russia; a series of security conferences initiated by the then Prime Minister Chernomyrdin in the autumn of 1997, combining hard with soft security issues; then President Yeltsin's "Northern Bridge" initiative; and a set of soft security initiatives in January 1998. Russia's overall Baltic policy thus changed from one focusing on hard security issues to one stressing soft security issues.[42] The Russian government surprised its neighbours by offering security guarantees to the Baltic states in 1997 in exchange for their remaining outside of military alliances, a connection which was "apparently removed later"[43]. It also surprised some sceptical observers by dismantling the radar station in the Latvian town of Skrunda according to schedule. Furthermore, after years of fierce anti-enlargement rhetoric and the threat of counter-measures, Russia grudgingly accepted NATO enlargement and the inclusion of Poland and the Baltic states in NATO.

Regardless of these positive trends, however, peaceful change has not yet been translated into dependable expectations of peaceful change, and the degree of trust accumulated during the 1990s as a result of peaceful conflict resolution and social interaction does not seem to be sufficient to refer justifiably to the Baltic Sea region already in terms of a security community.[44] Yet, acknowledging the existence of differences, exhibiting

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self-restraint while pursuing one's own security interests as well as believing and showing that "common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of 'peaceful change'"[45] appear to be quite promising blocks on which to build a sustainable process towards a pluralistic security community in the region.

One of the most difficult problems to be solved relating to security community building in the Baltic Sea region is to develop expectations of peaceful change between the states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and their respective societies on the one hand and the Russian state and society on the other.[46] Other difficult problems include the evolution of trust between the different segments of the society within the Baltic states and the improvement of the relations between Poland and Russia, in particular on the cultural-intellectual stage. The first aspect – the development of trust within the Baltic states – does not have to be discussed here. States, according to Deutsch, are political communities which function as security communities when revolution, secession and civil war are neither expected nor prepared for.[47] In the early 1990s there were two situations which are occasionally referred to in the literature in terms of autonomy movements, the one in the south-eastern part of Lithuania when, in 1991, parts of the Slavic population of the Vilnius region sought to form an autonomous region within Lithuania,[48] the other in the north-eastern part of Estonia when, in 1993, a referendum on local autonomy was initiated. Here, widespread dissatisfaction with both the adoption by the Estonian parliament of a law on the status of aliens and economic developments coincided with a local power struggle, but neither large-scale violence nor a war of secession loomed behind the temporary increase of tensions.[49] None of the two situations resulted in autonomy, not to mention secession.

The second aspect – Polish-Russian relations – is excluded from this article primarily because it would require a study of its own. Suffice it to say here that some ingredients of the Polish discourse on Poland's eastern policies still seem to be far away from expectations of peaceful change and shared values. On the political level business-like relations are being developed. Yet, as Alexei Miller shows, the discourse on Russia among Polish intellectuals still contains representations of Russia as a "civilization of death" as opposed to representations of the European Union as a "civilization of life". Russia is referred to in terms of the incurable Other, from which Lithuania, Belarus and especially Ukraine have to be protected. Likewise, it has been called for Polish policy to contain Russia and by so doing protect Poland and Europe.[50] These representations follow a Huntingtonian logic of a clash of civilizations[51] and reflect the Western tradition of 'otherizing' Russia which is neither a Polish speciality nor an invention of the 20th century. Rather, it can be traced back in the West European history of ideas to the second half of the 18th century and went through a profound renaissance as an ingredient of the "central Europe" discourse of the late 1980s and early 1990s.[52]

In the remainder, the article zooms in on one specific question, namely the ways of thinking about and representing Russia in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania throughout the 1990s, including a discussion of discursive and cognitive explanations. In the conclusions, a rather sober assessment will

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be made as to the state of cognitive approaches to the study of security communities and some orientations for future research will be given.

Ways of Thinking about Russia in the Baltic States

Referring to others as "rootless" is an ingredient of the standard European repertoire of representing the Other, be it a German, a Britain, or a Russian who is the Other. Yet, only in the case of Russia, "this is a stable feature of discourse throughout the 19th century and beyond". As Iver B. Neumann shows, the "metaphors of the Russians as nomadic barbarians, always on the move, pegging their tents on the outskirts of Europe, looming like an incubus, belong to a fixed imagery which would also crop up occasionally in, say, contemporary French constructions of the British (or in British 20th-century constructions of Germans)".[53] Just as Huntingtonian as the Polish case discussed above, in Estonia a significant factor in the cultural identity of the Baltic countries is said to have been "*living on the border* of Western civilization":

> We maintain that the most decisive role in the collapse of the Soviet Union was played […] by the civilizational conflict between the Russian-Soviet Empire, the "New Byzantium" of the 20th century, and the Baltic and other East-European nations, representing the Western traditions of individual autonomy and civil society. […] For Estonians and other people with a Western mind-set, living under the Soviets meant a "clash of civilizations" inside the mind of every single individual, the loss of personal integrity, and even the loss of the right to an authentic life-world.[54]

Representations of Russia in the debates over Finnishness in the 19th century, however, are said to have in general been neutral or benign. Only after Finland's independence negative stereotypes of Russia / the Soviet Union have emerged and gained the upper hand. Detaching Finland clearly from Russia / the Soviet Union aimed at both supporting the state building process and bridging internal social and class cleavages which had become manifest during the Civil War.[55] Moving from politics to the quotidian lives of ordinary people, Vieda Skultāns' analysis of personal accounts in post-Soviet Latvia supports the notion of beliefs in clear attitudinal and behavioural boundaries:

> Love of solitude, of one's home, of the homeland, love of work and self-control are all consciously used to symbolize the boundaries between Latvians and non-Latvians. Conversely, non-Latvians are distinguished by the absence of these traits. […] For example, Latvians' love of quiet and solitude are contrasted with Russian love of noise and crowds. References are made to the Latvian tradition of living in isolated farmsteads and contrasted with the Russian tradition of villages. The ideal situation for a house is thought to be one where no sign of human habitation is visible. The Latvian habit of speaking quietly and calmly is contrasted with Russian habits of loud talking and shouting. Latvians pride themselves on being self-controlled, whereas Russians

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> are thought to lack discipline and self-control: they swear and drink. Latvians characterize themselves by their extreme attachment to locality and to the idea of a Latvian homeland. Russians are perceived as rootless, ready to move to where the going is good.[56]

In addition to personal experience, the reproduction of stereotyped ostensible national characteristics in literary anthologies, history and school books influences the Latvian image of Russians.[57] The above references are not meant to argue for a return to the traditional political culture approach in search of national characters and national images which are referred to in order to explain foreign policy.[58] But stereotypes and myths are a part of the cognitive context within which representations of and policy manifestations on Russia are articulated in Latvia and, by implication, also in Estonia and Lithuania. This context includes past victimization in the sense of experiences of war, occupation, collectivization, imprisonment, deportation and the loss of independence which were an integral ingredient of the lives of many Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians in the 20th century. Although referring to past victimization carries with it the danger of seeing the present and future primarily through the lenses of the past, cognitive systems are inseparably connected with individual and collective experiences as well as with overall history and, as Anatol Lieven has put it, with “myth as history and history as myth”[59]. Individual experiences of the Soviet time, characterized by arbitrariness and chance, persist in the post-Soviet time and arguably result in a specific inertia of the belief system. This belief system can be assumed to be relatively impervious to change because “[w]hat is experienced as history by one generation becomes structure for the next”[60]. Focussing analytically on the front stage behaviour as represented in policy manifestations while ignoring the back stage behaviour as embodied in the cognitive structure may result in an inadequate understanding of what is being said and the degree of internalization in the belief system of the speaker. These questions are relevant to the issue of security community building since – as was argued above – security communities are to a large extent based on mental structures. Which thought patterns can then be revealed behind representations of Russia in the political discourse on security in the Baltic states during the 1990s? The following list is suggestive, not exhaustive.

Estonia, in the words of the then Minister of Defence, Hain Rebas, in December 1992 was confronted with “dangers from the East”. Likewise, Colonel Ants Laaneots saw the threat to Estonia emanating from the East. The Speaker of the Estonian Parliament, Ülo Nugis, declared that “NATO and only NATO can provide us with sufficient security guarantees against Russia”. The then Lithuanian Minister of National Defence, Audrius Butkevičius, in February 1993 saw indirect rather than direct threats emerging from both the increasing instability in what used to be the Soviet Union and “growing tendencies of authoritarianism and nationalism in the territory of the former Soviet Union, above all in Russia” which could possibly involve Lithuania.[61]

The Latvian Defence Minister Kristovskis depicted Russia as still adhering to “old ambitions and historic nostalgia”. Likewise, according to the Latvian

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President, Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, Russia still has “nostalgia for the Soviet Empire” and her Estonian counterpart at that time, Lennart Meri, added that “[i]n the East we see with regret the rebirth of Russian chauvinism and readiness to sacrifice basic human values in the name of power”. According to Gintaras Tamulaitis, Lithuania, in developing military structures, assumes to “face no military threat from the West: Lithuania regards the West as a guarantor of its security, a natural and trustworthy partner”. This statement renders it unnecessary to state explicitly who is seen as a threat to Lithuanian security. Likewise, Kristovskis emphasizes that Latvia has “friendly neighbours to the north (Estonia) and south (Lithuania), but she also shares several hundred kilometres of border with Russia and Byelorussia”.[62]

While the discourse on security in the first years after gaining independence had been governed by representing Russia as a direct or indirect threat to Baltic security, the patterns of argumentation later changed. To be sure, Russia was still seen as a threat to national security. Yet, it was not longer the representation of Russia as predictably malevolent which guided the interpretation. Rather, Russia was depicted as unpredictable and instable, and this was in itself seen as a threat to security. Numerous references could be given here. Consider the following examples. According to Aare Raid, “[t]he main threat to the national security of Estonia remains the unpredictability of the development of the democratization process in Russia”. According to Atis Lejiņš, “[w]hat threatens Baltic independence is the same as what the West fears – the unpredictability of the future of Russia and its inability to overcome its imperial past”. Miglé Budryté adds that “[t]he major external risks for Lithuania’s security today are connected with instability on the territory of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is characterized by inter-regional, ethnic-religious, territorial and/or social conflicts”. According to Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, “Russia is extremely unpredictable. […] The simple fact of unpredictability scares me”.[63]

Another constant feature of the representations of Russia is the equation of Russia with the Soviet Union. In Graeme Herd’s estimation there is a “close association in the minds of Baltic decision-makers of Soviet and Russian imperial traditions and ambitions”.[64] To some extent, this confusion is not surprising. After all, the Russian Federation is the legal successor to the Soviet Union. One should also consider the troop withdrawal issue when Soviet troops actually became Russian troops. The Russian army’s temporary presence in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was frequently seen through the prism of the historical experience with the Soviet army. The negotiations on the limited use of the radar station in Skrunda, Latvia, by the Russian army are another case in point. Memories of 1939 and 1940 were often invoked in which case demanding mutual assistance agreements and army bases in the territories of the Baltic states had indeed preceded the Soviet occupation. Accordingly, the negotiations were represented by some authors as a possible first step to a further occupation of Latvia.[65]

To sum up, during the 1990s Russia was consistently represented either as a direct or an indirect threat to Baltic security. Alternative interpretations

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were effectively marginalized. The patterns of argumentation were to some extent flexible. It was either Russia's actual or potential strength or current weakness which was seen as threatening the Baltic states; either predictable Russian malevolence or unpredictability; either Russian capabilities or, if the current capabilities were regarded as insufficient, potential future capabilities or even presupposed intentions; either Russia as a military, political or cultural threat. The representation of Russia as a threat to Baltic security and independence made itself fairly independent of Russia's factual Baltic policy which can be sketched as follows.

Firstly, it is worth repeating that Russia's Baltic policy has been non-violent. Secondly, almost no anti-Baltic statement on the part of Russian politicians led to effective and enduring anti-Baltic policies; rhetoric was translated into policy only occasionally, economic sanctions were of short duration, provocatively labelled military exercises were the exception. Thirdly, most anti-Baltic statements by Russian politicians have to be seen in connection with domestic power struggles in Russia and were primarily meant for domestic consumption. The translation of Vladimir Zhirinovsky's invective into considerable electoral success in December 1993[66] was certainly an important event which may be seen as one of the reasons for Lithuania's application for NATO membership in early 1994. In general, however, anti-Baltic rhetoric was not rewarded with electoral success. For example, then Foreign Minister Kozyrev's unconvincing nationalistic turn and his attempts "to prove that he was a more genuine nationalist than Zhirinovsky himself"[67] were directed at the domestic audience but failed to attract a major part of the electorate. The same can be said of his condemnation of the Estonian Law on Aliens as "apartheid" and "ethnic cleansing" in 1993. Fourthly, Russian politics towards the Baltic states were mostly reactive rather than active. As Lieven has pointed out, the official Russian policy has:

> responded to things that the Balts have done or said, for instance on citizenship, military withdrawal, language laws, border claims, property questions, the status of Kaliningrad and so on. But with rare exceptions, in the period 1991–94 [the Russians] did not actually themselves seek out or invent disputes as part of a deliberate planned campaign to worsen relations and create insecurity.[68]

Although many observers in the Baltic states frequently emphasized or took for granted Moscow's ostensible malevolence and hostility to the Baltic states, the Russian leadership factually displayed, within certain limits, "a deference to Baltic concerns, which is unique in the pattern of Russia's relations with its ex-Soviet neighbours"[69]. Fifthly, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were in the *perestroika-glasnost* period seriously interested in the creation of what they called a Common European House based on the CSCE model. To be sure, trying to disembark the United States from Europe was one motive. Yet Gorbachev did see the Soviet Union as a European state and believed in a "shared cultural heritage" on the basis of which he aspired to reform the Soviet economic and political order. The Russian leadership in the Yeltsin period insisted on both Russia's Europeanness and locating Russia within European borders. President

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Putin has at several occasions reaffirmed Russia's desire to be treated as a part of Europe.[70] Some observers in the Baltic states, however, saw things in a different light. For example, Phillip Petersen, in November 1991, quoted the then Vice President of the Lithuanian Supreme Council, Česlovas Stankevičius, as saying that he

> 'cannot imagine that Russia could be brought into Europe'. In his opinion, 'Russia is not a European country, but an Asian country in terms of mentality.' He argues that 'European Russia up to the Ural Mountains is the European part of Asia.'[71]

According to the then Chief Officer of the Lithuanian Ministry of European Affairs,

> Lithuania's foreign policy after the reestablishment of independence was based on the "realistic" premise that after the Cold War ideas about the "common security system of Europe" were mere rhetoric of the transition period, a guise for the enduring disagreements between the West and Russia, and that after a certain time new lines of division in Europe would be drawn.[72]

The peculiar consistency in the representations of Russia can thus not be explained by Russia's actual Baltic policy. This consistency can ironically be observed in a period during which the Baltic states aspired to integration in Western institutions while Western representations increasingly referred to Russia in terms of a partner. The persistent depiction of Russia in negative terms thus violated the emerging discursive structures in the West simultaneously with the Baltic states trying to return to the West. Intra-Baltic discursive structures, based on rigid belief systems, dominated the emerging European discursive structures. From a socio-psychological point of view, this situation is not surprising because:

> states that have been expansionist under one set of circumstances or leaders are likely to be seen as posing a continuing threat. The state's aggressiveness will be seen as rooted in factors such as geography and national character that change slowly, if at all. […] [Consequently,] when one country thinks that another is its enemy, the perception of hostility is usually more central than other aspects of the image […].[73]

Jervis then hypothesizes that "when the other acts with restraint, […] the actor would be more likely to change his view of the other's strength than of its intentions".[74] Combining socio-psychological with realist assumptions, Jervis states elsewhere that "even if the other state now supports the status quo, it may become dissatisfied later".[75] In addition, early cognitive approaches have shown that, while trying to keep their sets of core beliefs as coherent as possible, actors usually adapt selectively to changes in the environment and equally selectively process incoming information in accordance with pre-existing beliefs.[76] The representations of Russia were indeed very coherent during the 1990s regardless of the changes in the

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internal and external environment – from quasi statehood to statehood, from involuntary freedom from alliances to future NATO membership, from Russian rhetorical aggressiveness to a policy of constructive engagement – thus revealing a cognitive consistency which, in turn, is indicative of a rather solid belief system.

Explaining Changes in Representations

What happened then at the beginning of the new millennium? Miraculously, military threats in general and representations of Russia as a threat have almost totally escaped from policy statements and security policy documents in the Baltic states. The authors of the Estonian National Security Concept have even been criticized in the Estonian media for too strong an adaptation to the soft security discourse cultivated in the West (prior to the 11th of September 2001).[77] Here, four different explanations for this shift shall be discussed. They are by no means mutually exclusive.

Firstly, following an explanation which focuses on instrumentality it can be argued that the shift of emphasis reflects a failure of the earlier approaches to membership of NATO. Baltic decision-makers seem to have understood at that point that representations of Russia as a threat to Baltic and European security would hardly result in an invitation to NATO membership. Rather, their chance of becoming NATO members was inversely proportionate to the extent to which they referred to Russia in terms of a threat to the Baltic states in particular and “Europe” in general. Thus, it is true that the governments of the Baltic states tried to use their perception of a threat emanating from Russia as an argument for NATO membership,[78] but it is equally true that they received an invitation to NATO only when they abandoned their representation of Russia as a threat.

Continuing to present the Baltic states as threatened by, and as a bulwark against, presupposed Russian aggressiveness would have been counterproductive, for two reasons. One is that the prospects of becoming involved in a military conflict between the Baltic states and Russia was one of the reasons for NATO to refuse too direct and ambitious an engagement in the Baltic region in the first half of the 1990s. The other is that during the decade NATO has been representing Russia increasingly in terms of a partner. Recommending oneself as a bastion against a partner would neither make sense nor be a promising pre-accession strategy. The rhetorical adaptation of representing Russia as unpredictable rather than outright hostile followed just as advertising oneself in terms of protecting “Europe” from uncertainty and unpredictability.[79] Furthermore, while developing arguments for Baltic NATO membership, Baltic decision-makers side-tracked the Russian issue and started to emphasize what the Baltic states have in common with the Western states rather than what distinguishes them from Russia. Moreover, they advertised their strivings after membership in terms of a general (re-)integrationist policy, strictly following the rhetorical patterns given by NATO. Baltic decision-makers adapted themselves to the official NATO parlance since the mid-1990s by emphasizing NATO´s character as a community of values rather than one of defence; as a political rather than a military organization (respectively as an organization the membership of which is aspired to for political rather than

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military reasons); as something “new” (“the new NATO”); as well as by emphasizing their own role as a contributor to, rather than a beneficiary of security. It was both an expression of the idea of returning to the West and a rhetorical adaptation to NATO’s anticipated set of expectations which leads directly to the second explanation.

Discourse analysis can help to shed light on the change in the representations of Russia at the end of the decade. Discursive analysis is interested in rules governing articulation. It explores shared understandings governing the use of language and differentiating that which can legitimately be said from that which cannot. In this understanding, language does not refer to something else – it is not a stand-in for some “hidden reality” – but, rather, a system in itself, “giv[ing] meaning to the activities which make up social reality”. Discourse analysis thus investigates “the relationship between the rules and conventions of specific ‘language games’ or ‘forms of life’ and their socio-historical and cultural meaning”.[80] But language games are also reflecting power relations. Wanting to become a member of NATO and the European Union clearly required an adaptation to the “language games” played in and by these two organizations. Furthermore, since the process of transformation in the Baltic states is one of adaptation to the Western type of political, economic and social organization, the discursive structures within which this transformation unfolds are by and large constituted in and by the West. Challenging them by adhering to different “language games” is counterproductive. Sticking to the structure of discourse prevalent in the Baltic states, which was deeply grounded in cognitive structures, would have resulted in isolation from the Western world.

Thirdly, the sudden disappearance of representations of Russia as a threat at the beginning of the new millennium can also be explained in terms of a cognitive approach. Coherent belief systems and especially core beliefs are stable and resistant to change, but “should change occur [it is likely] that it will be abrupt and profound”.[81] Remember, for example, the October 1986 interview in which the then German Chancellor Kohl compared the Soviet Secretary General Gorbachev with the German National Socialist Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels,[82] an expression which arguably expressed both Kohl’s profound belief in the illegitimacy of the Soviet system and his scepticism about the reliability and trustworthiness of the decision makers representing this system. Without a profound and swift change in beliefs the subsequent development of the personal relationship between Kohl and Gorbachev would appear to have been as unlikely as the subsequent political developments, among which the accession of the German Democratic Republic to the purview of the *Grundgesetz* figures prominently. As to the change in the representations of Russia in the Baltic states it may be speculated that it was facilitated by the somehow more relaxed attitude of the Russian President Putin, exhibited, for example, at the occasion of his visit to Finland in September 2001, to the question of Baltic NATO membership.[83] Other factors explaining this change include the stabilization of Baltic statehood, the reduction in domestic tensions and the relaxation, within certain limits, of Baltic–Russian relations.

Finally, some words must be said about the role of the United States in

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shaping and changing the "language games" and perhaps even the belief systems. Arguably, it is not so much the question of NATO enlargement, put forward energetically by the US administrations, which matters most with respect to security community building. After all, military alliances are "a comparatively poor pathway to integration".[84] As a project excluding Russia, NATO enlargement was the single most serious conflict in the field of military security in the Baltic Sea region in the second half of the 1990s. As to the resolution of this conflict, substantial credit should be given the Clinton administration. By incorporating in its Northern Europe Initiative (NEI), launched in 1997, a commitment to Baltic NATO membership and by simultaneously developing a network of cooperation with Russia within the same initiative but also within, for example, the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation program and the Cooperative Threat Reduction program,[85] the US administration exhibited a fairly sophisticated approach to security in Europe's North. The ideas underlying the US projects have changed to some extent in the light of the reformulation of the US foreign and security policy after the 11th of September 2001, the focus of the projects narrowed, the initial selectivity has evaporated, some of the envisioned synergy effects remained unfulfilled and duplication looms.[86] Yet, perhaps surprisingly, the basic lines of thought underlying the NEI still show many parallels to the basic thought patterns of the original security community conception. The NEI basically aims at security by political means, security rather with than against others and cooperation among non-state and local actors in low politics areas to foster a sense of community in the region and to make borders transparent and permeable. By adhering to this understanding of security and by expecting the other actors in the region to do likewise, the US administration exercised considerable influence on Baltic decision makers and, without neglecting their legitimate interest in military security, helped them alter and relax their attitudes towards security. By synchronizing the Northern Europe Initiative with the European Union's Northern Dimension and by adapting the NEI to existing patterns of cooperation in Europe's North – the Initiative indeed is a rare case of a US foreign policy adaptation rather to than superposition on a regional environment – the US administration furthermore contributed to what has been called constructive redundancy.[87] This is important because it can increase responsiveness between states and societies by both providing for "more information about one another, more attention to that information, more joint operations, and more actual contact"[88] and ensuring that information received would adequately be understood.

The need to adequately understand information can finally be illustrated by means of a statement by the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, before a Baltic audience in February 2000. Prodi's comments – "any attack or aggression against an EU member nation would be an attack or aggression against the whole EU"[89] – conspicuously resembled the words of NATO's and WEU's articles five and seemed to suggest that the European Union's deficiency relating to hard security would finally energetically been tackled – a deficiency in particular in the eyes of many Baltic commentators who, throughout the 1990s, had made clear that "[w]hile EU membership will indirectly strengthen our security, especially economic security, only NATO membership can fully ensure that democratic

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values and stability are defended".[90] Yet, Prodi later qualified his statement by saying that the "use of the word 'attack' had no military significance". Moreover, the sense of security resulting from membership in the European Union should not be confused with "the kind of territorial security commitment provided by articles in the NATO and WEU treaties, which were not part of the discussions" in Latvia and Lithuania. Rather, membership of the EU gives a "sense of belonging [which is] in a real sense an effective guarantee of security".[91] This, in a nutshell, is what the European Union is about when it comes to security. This is also why the EU is frequently referred to in terms of a security community. The new member states will benefit from the effective guarantee of security resulting from the sense of belonging stressed by Prodi, all the more so since EU enlargement has not yet alienated Russia. Given these prospects, the technical problems resulting from the enlargement of the European Union with respect to, for example, the Kaliningrad region and the application of the Schengen visa regime[92] seem to be of only secondary importance. Indeed, if handled with care the conflicts emanating from the enlargement may even have a positive function for the improvement of the social relations between those within and those outside the European Union. After all, "[i]nsofar as conflict is the resolution of tension between antagonists it has stabilizing functions and becomes an integrating component of the relationship" as long as "the basic assumptions upon which the relation is founded" are not violated.[93] In a security community, the basic assumption is peaceful change. This assumption has not been, and is not likely to be violated by the enlargement of the European Union.

Conclusions

Rather than arguing for a strict separation between discursive and cognitive approaches, the above discussion suggests that both (and more) are needed. In doing so it follows the assessment put forward in cultural studies that "different methods have their advantages in different circumstances and can, in any case, be combined".[94] It argues against methodological simplicity as an end in itself, but does not yet have to offer a solution to the diverse methodological problems which are notoriously arising from the combination of different approaches. The cognitive dimension of security community building in the Baltic Sea region is to a large extent an empty vessel and it still requires considerable research to fill it with contents. What should be clear after the preceding discussion, however, is that policy statements are no reliable indicator of a sense of community and identification with one another in terms of security. Instrumentality, deception, a superficial internalization of the norms and values rhetorically adhered to in such statements and other factors require a more penetrating approach. Following Alexander Wendt, it may be argued that a third level internalization of norms and values is needed in order to refer justifiably to a given form of social interaction in terms of a security community. A third level internalization means "that people follow norms not because they think it will serve some exogenously given end but because they think the norms are legitimate and therefore *want* to follow them".[95] A third level internalization has to be distinguished from a first level internalization – adherence to norms because otherwise punishment would follow – and a second level internalization – adherence to norms out of self-interest. The

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methodological problems involved in such a differentiation are tremendous. They have been noted in the literature[96] and can certainly not be solved here.

Returning to one of the questions which are regularly addressed in the literature on security communities in the Baltic Sea region – the extent to which the Baltic Sea region can be referred to in terms of a security community – and the more specific question concerning the representations of Baltic–Russian relations sketched above, it may be said that changes in policy manifestations, even profound ones, are no sufficient indicator of the existence of a security community. One problem is the danger of what can be called a simulation of community: a specific set of norms and values may be rhetorically adhered to for instrumental purposes, i.e. in order to achieve other gains. Behind the social mask of public verbal attachments may be hidden differences which, if they are not addressed adequately, may in the long term effectively undermine the process of community building. Remember both Deutsch's scepticism of verbal attachments cited above and the constructivist warning against taking policy manifestations at face value. What is required, then, is a contextualization of policy statements. For example, regardless of the adherence in policy statements to the same set of norms and values, the reconstruction of the socio-economic system in the Baltic states considerably deviates from the Nordic welfare state. This does not only seem to result from financial restrictions rendering the evolution of a comprehensive welfare state in the Baltic states impossible in the near future. It also reflects a different overall approach to the relationship between the economy and the society which is partly resulting from too much economic control and state interference and too little economic benefits during the Soviet period.[97]

Furthermore, it has been noted that the representation of the EU accession policies as policies strictly following the rules established by the European Union is too simple. The new EU members will hardly become carbon copies of the EU average. Indeed, in political reality a "pattern of deftly miming Western rhetoric and playing by the so-called Western rules while producing political effects different from those envisioned by Western benefactors" can often be observed.[98] This differentiated process of EU accession, however, is no problem as regards security community building as long as the basic relationships between states and societies remain dedicated to peaceful adaptation and the basic organizing principles – negotiated and to some extent altered in the course of the accession process – do not display incompatible traits. A sense of community does not require one to become precisely like the other. Rather, the issue is one of both a partial identification with one another[99] and the acknowledgement of difference. In order to appreciate difference, however, one has to be cognizant of it. As Edward Said lamented in a different context: "Identity, always identity, over and above knowing about others."[100] Cognitive approaches to the study of security communities may not only help to come to a more adequate understanding of the processes supporting or inhibiting the emergence of a security community. They may also help to clarify the differences between states and societies in the Baltic Sea region. Paradoxically, these differences may be capitalized on in order to build and stabilize expectations of peaceful change in the region.[101]

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8 Ibid., 163.

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Wirtschaft und Kultur
ISSN 1863639X
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